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SUBJECT: SPECIAL ENVOY FOR NUCLEAR NONPROLIFERATION MEETS WITH MFA, QATAR FOUNDATION

REF: DOHA 87

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Special Envoy for Nuclear Nonproliferation Jackie Wolcott and an interagency delegation of State Department, Department of Energy (DoE), National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA), and Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) officials met June 12 with MFA and Qatar Foundation (QF) officials to discuss bilateral nuclear energy cooperation and the possibility of signing a non-binding memorandum of understanding (MOU) on peaceful nuclear cooperation. Both the MFA and QF are aware that the MOU will not take effect, and cooperation will not begin, until Qatar's NPT safeguards agreement is in force. MFA agreed to follow up with the Embassy and relevant Qatari entities on pursuing the MOU. For its part, QF said it would push the GOQ for an MOU to help Qatar build educational and human resource capacity in the nuclear field. Based on discussions with QF, Qatar is in no hurry to site a nuclear plant for electrical energy needs, owing to its vast natural gas reserves. However, QF wishes to pursue the separate capacity building track at full speed. QF also expressed interest in U.S. help in establishing a nuclear regulatory body in Qatar and in tapping U.S. expertise to study the feasibility of a nuclear power plant. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) Special Envoy for Nuclear Nonproliferation Jackie Wolcott and an interagency delegation consisting of Andrew Steinfeld (Office Director for NEA/ARP), Dr. Alex Burkart (Deputy Director, Office of Nuclear Energy Safety and Security at State), Jack Ramsey (Senior Nuclear Engineer, National Regulatory Commission), Elizabeth Lisann (Foreign Affairs Specialist, Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Corporate and Global Partnership Development, Department of Energy), John McClelland-Kerr (Foreign Affairs Specialist, Office of Global Security Engagement and Cooperation, National Nuclear Security Administration, Department of Energy), Dr. Marc Humphrey (Physical Scientist, Office of the Special Envoy for Nuclear Nonproliferation at State), and Ariel Stukalin (Foreign Affairs Officer, ISN/RA) met June 12 with MFA Director for Legal Affairs Ahmed Hassan Al-Hammadi and the Science and Technology Adviser at the QF to Her Highness Sheikha Mozah, Dr. Tidu Maini. P/E Chief and PolOff also joined the meetings. Proposed meetings with the Supreme Council for the Environment and Natural Reserves (SCENR) were called off shortly before the delegation arrived, as these officials were in Belgium discussing nuclear cooperation there. Similarly, proposed meetings with the Ministry of Energy fell though at the last minute due to bureaucratic snafus, indicative of the disorganization on the Qatari Government side observed by the delegation (in contrast to the very good impression left by QF).

¶3. (SBU) Ambassador Wolcott explained in the separate meetings at MFA and QF that Secretary Rice had appointed her to implement the July 2007 U.S.-Russian Declaration on Nuclear Energy and Nonproliferation. Through the joint Declaration, the U.S. and Russia seek to cooperate with

countries considering nuclear energy to promote the highest standards of safety, security and nonproliferation. Ambassador Wolcott noted tat the UAE, Bahrain, and Saudi Arabia had signed on-binding memoranda of understanding (MOUs) wit the U.S. in recent weeks at the ministerial levl, and that the U.S. iswilling to sign an MOU shold Qatar wish to enter such an arrangement. Al-Hammadi told Ambassador Wolcott that he would take a look at the draft MOU and coordinate a GOQ response. Asked how soon the MOU needed to be signed, Ambassador Wolcott responded that the sooner an MOU is in place, the sooner bilateral cooperation could begin.

¶4. (SBU) Burkart signaled in both meetings that Qatar's signing of a Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) safeguards agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency is essential, in the U.S. view, to cooperation. Al-Hammadi said the safeguards agreement and similar assurances are in the domain of MFA Director for UN Affairs and International Organizations Adel Al-Khal, who was traveling and unavailable for a meeting June 12. Al-Hammadi and P/E Chief agreed to coordinate with Al-Khal on the U.S. requirements for signing the MOU. Maini said QF would work behind the scenes with the GOQ to have this agreement and any other necessary arrangements finalized.

¶5. (SBU) Lisann briefed MFA and QF on the Global Nuclear Energy Partnership (GNEP), noting that Qatar would soon be invited to join the other participant countries. She explained that membership status would require Qatar's signing on to GNEP's Statement of Principles, but that observer status would not require any such commitment.

Stukalin also briefed MFA on the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism.

Qatar Foundation

¶6. (SBU) Maini, who was joined at QF by Dr. Eulian Roberts (Director of the QF Science and Technology Park), briefed the delegation on QF's role. He explained that QF, along with Texas A&M/Qatar -- whose campus in Doha is under QF auspices -- and Qatar University, is primarily focused on "capacity building" in the areas of energy, environment, and health care. Indeed, this is one of the aims of the Science and Technology Park, where collaborative efforts among various companies are expected to achieve new synergies. Maini cited as an example cooperation between General Electric and Conoco-Phillips -- neighbors in the Park -- on water desalination. For every gallon of oil extracted from the ground, said Maini, three gallons of water are wasted. Working together, the two U.S. firms aim to reduce this waste.

¶7. (SBU) Besides petroleum-based programs, the Science and Technology Park is developing research partnerships in the nuclear and solar energy fields, according to Maini. Maini said that "upstream" solar research (i.e., the development of polycrystalline material) is the best place for Qatar to focus. QF has as a goal opening a factory to produce more such material in 2010. Also in the solar field, QF is working on research on wafers, panels, and power stations.

¶8. (SBU) In Maini's opinion, Qatar "ought to look at" the possibility of nuclear power generation within twenty years' time, though it is too early to consider building a plant now. Maini commented that the UAE is moving forward much faster than Qatar, largely because its industry is more energy intensive and its power needs more urgent. Not so Qatar, which could afford to take a slower, more measured approach, given its natural gas holdings (the third largest in the world). Under the leadership of Her Highness Sheikha Mozah (who was described by Maini as a "strategic thinker"),

QF has therefore made human resource development the early priority. Maini made clear that capacity building in the medical, agricultural and power fields are on a different track from possible nuclear plant construction. The feasibility of the latter, stressed Maini, is still being assessed, but QF is moving forward as quickly as possible on the former.

¶9. (SBU) Maini acknowledged that the French had sent a delegation to Doha to promote French cooperation in determining nuclear plant feasibility and building nuclear capacity. He observed, however, that the French were aware that Qatar is not ready to buy a nuclear power plant, and were therefore more interested in the UAE, since that program was moving ahead at a much more rapid pace. Maini added that U.S. companies do not seem interested in pursuing the construction of a nuclear plant in Qatar due to the small scale of the country's current needs. Maini said for the foreseeable future Qatar would continue to rely on foreign workers to build infrastructure. In response to a question about the possibility of a regional approach to nuclear power in the Gulf, Maini stated that it would not be unheard of, for example, to import electricity from Saudi Arabia, though it would be complicated by poor grid quality. Asked who in Qatar would be responsible for nuclear regulation, Maini responded that in principle this lies with SCENR, which is composed primarily of Qatari nationals. Roberts added that he was aware that indigenous regulatory oversight has to be "built into the process" and that QF aims at boosting the number of homegrown engineers and technicians over the longer term.

Expanded Meeting at QF

¶10. (SBU) Joined by Professor Ilham Al-Qaradawi, Associate Professor of Physics at Qatar University, and Associate Dean for Research and Graduate Studies James Holste and Professor Howard Hadley of Texas A&M/Qatar, the delegation began more detailed discussions. Maini asked if the U.S. could, as a discrete project, assist Qatar in creating a regulatory body for nuclear energy. Ramsey responded that NRC has 30 years of experience in the nuclear regulatory field and is currently home to 104 reactors, adding that the U.S. would potentially host 134 total reactors in the years ahead. Ramsey then outlined the U.S. NRC design certification

process, followed by the matching of an approved generic design to a proposed plant site, that then leads to a review of fitness for a nuclear plant proposal. Maini said Qatar would be interested in pursuing with U.S. officials the establishment of a national regulatory authority. Ambassador Wolcott encouraged Qatar, at an appropriate time, to send a team to Washington for discussions in this area. Maini reemphasized that QF was taking a two-track approach to nuclear power, based on capacity building and feasibility studies. He expressed interest in moving rapidly on the former (i.e., a cooperation package for the development of a national regulator) while acknowledging that the latter is more complex and should wait until an MOU is in place.

¶11. (SBU) Asked what other requirements Qatar would need to meet to pursue bilateral arrangements with the U.S. in civilian nuclear power, Burkart responded that, while a 123 Agreement would be necessary for the transfer of nuclear materials or major reactor components, other types of cooperation (such as regulatory information exchanges) could take place outside of a formal MOU or 123 Agreement. He added that certain types of technology transfer would require a DOE license, while transfer of certain dual-use items would require licensing from the Department of Commerce. He added that the proposed MOU would be a non-binding but useful tool to facilitate exchanges, noting that Texas A&M and U.S. industry would wait for an MOU before significant

nuclear-sector engagement. Burkart also stressed that a full-scope safeguards agreement remains essential to bilateral cooperation with Qatar. He also mentioned the importance of practical conventions that codify "best practices," and the U.S. side undertook to provide a handout summarizing these various safety, security, and liability conventions.

¶12. (SBU) Turning to nuclear plant feasibility studies, Maini asked what assistance the U.S. could provide in this area. McClelland-Kerr said that NNSA (which is part of DOE) could be of assistance in both energy planning and feasibility studies. Asked how to begin cooperation in this area, McClelland-Kerr noted that a work plan would first need to be developed, and Burkart recommended that a Qatari contact be put in touch with a DOE contact to coordinate this. It was noted that a feasibility study had recently been done in Jordan, which could serve as an exemplar. In terms of funding, the U.S. side noted that it has more capacity than resources, and raised the prospect of Qatar paying for this study. Lisann then provided a briefing on the Global Nuclear Energy Partnership (GNEP), and noted that this could serve as another vehicle for such cooperation.

¶13. (SBU) Al-Qaradawi made a short presentation on educational and research capacity building efforts undertaken by QF. She noted that there were currently two areas of interest: environmental studies (e.g., measurement of baseline radiation levels) and research with low-energy positrons. In addition, radiation labs and other equipment for education and research were being established as part of the collaboration between Qatar University and Texas A&M/Qatar. Also in place is a measurement verification program with Sandia National Laboratory.

¶14. (SBU) Maini closed the meeting by reiterating that QF would engage MFA on why Qatar would benefit from an MOU with the U.S. and acknowledged the importance of the IAEA safeguards agreement (to which Burkart noted that the process of signing such an agreement is quite straightforward and there is little negotiation involved). Maini said interagency discussions on a common Qatari policy in the nuclear realm would likely begin in October, following the establishment of a Ministry of Energy and QF joint working group (under as-yet undecided independent leadership) to address overall policy differences between the two sides. Maini alluded to QF's desire for speed in ramping up capacity building, while Energy (see reftel) sees no need to hurry on nuclear energy issues. Ambassador Wolcott, following up on the need for a safeguards agreement, asked who would take lead on this aspect of policy. Maini did not know but said SCENR may take lead on it once the new committee is formed. Following the close of the meeting, Maini proposed that Ambassador Wolcott draft a short letter to Sheikha Mozah, summarizing her visit and stressing the importance of having a comprehensive safeguards agreement and MOU in place before further cooperation, in order to leverage Mozah's influence within the Qatari Government. Wolcott agreed, and a letter was sent and delivered to QF on June 17.

¶15. (U) Ambassador Wolcott has cleared this message.
RATNEY